

Health Warning... *(Continuation from front page)*

- The health warning statement must appear in a prominent place on the front of the container and must be printed horizontally;
- The health warning statement must be printed in red or black type on a white background and must be surrounded by a lined border;
- The first two words of the health warning statement (*government warning*) must appear in capital letters and bold face type that is at least 15 percent larger than the remaining text of the statement. The text of the remaining portion of the warning statement must be in upper and lower case lettering. A particular type font should be required to maximize legibility; and
- The health warning statement must be accompanied by a red pictorial device or icon that is a triangle with an exclamation mark inside.

At this time, we are studying the petition and the attached materials. After engaging in further fact-finding on this issue, we will make a decision regarding what action to take on the petition. ■

(OIV) Progress *(Continuation from front page)*

wine, to recommend to member states measures to protect their viticultural interests, and to suggest ways to improve the international wine market. An additional purpose of the OIV has been to try to protect the interests of wine producers and consumers by encouraging the protection of wine appellations of origin, guaranteeing the purity and authenticity of wine products, and encouraging the repression of fraud and unfair competition.

Some of the issues with which the OIV concerns itself have great importance for United States wine producers and distributors. Although the OIV addresses all products of the vine, it places particular emphasis on wine and its production methods, packaging and labeling standards, and associated marketing practices to ensure product integrity and to harmonize regulatory requirements, when feasible.

Some of the general benefits to the United States of participating in the OIV include an increase in international trade and an increase in the integrity of wine products sold in world commerce. In addition, the OIV facilitates the global dissemination of wine information and opens up intergovernmental channels of communication which help to resolve international incidents involving impediments to trade, contamination, and marketing fraud.

The United States is encouraging the OIV to adopt consensus as its standard decision-making process and to adopt English and Spanish as official languages of the OIV on an equal basis with French. Adoption of these proposals should go a long way toward making the OIV a more transparent organization that operates in a similar manner to other truly international, intergovernmental organizations. ■

ATF Suspends Action on Health Claims and Other Health-Related Statements in the Labeling and Advertising of Alcohol Beverages

By Ed Reisman (202) 927-8100

In February 1999, ATF approved two directional statements on wine labels. One directed consumers to their family doctors for information regarding the "health effects of wine consumption." The second referred consumers to the Federal Government's "Dietary Guidelines for Americans" for such information. The approval of these labels generated considerable interest from Federal health officials, members of Congress, and public advocacy groups, who expressed concern about consumer perception of the label statements.

Because ATF is seeking public comments on this very issue, ATF will suspend action on any new Applications For And Certification/Exemption of Label Approval (ATF F 5100.31) bearing similar "directional" health-related statements pending the completion of the rulemaking proceedings.

Background: On October 25, 1999, ATF invited comments on our current policy on health-related statements by publishing the policy as a proposed regulation in the Federal Register (Notice No. 884). The regulation would specifically prohibit the use of any health claim in the labeling or advertisements of alcohol beverages unless it is balanced, properly qualified, sufficiently detailed and specific, and outlines the categories of persons for whom any positive effects would be outweighed by the numerous negative health effects. In addition, ATF seeks comments on whether directional health statements such as those approved in February 1999 tend to mislead consumers about the health consequences of alcohol consumption. The comment period was initially scheduled to close on February 22, 2000.

In order to ensure that all interested parties have an opportunity to express their views on these extremely important issues, ATF will hold public hearings in cities and on dates to be announced. A notice of public hearings will be published in the Federal Register shortly after the close of the comment period. A copy of the proposed regulations is on the ATF website at www.atf.treas.gov/core/alcohol/rules/rules.htm. ■